

Michael & Andrew Van Ostade about THE GHASTLY BROTHERS

“Our fights are based upon 30 years of training”

Suffering from ghosts, poltergeists or paranormal plague? The Ghastly Brothers will help you out. Where monsters lurk - in the closet, basement or under the bed - these professional ghost hunters will catch them and lock them up for good. But when Lilith and her friends in boarding school track down a supernatural phenomenon, the Ghastly Brothers take on the most dangerous task of their career; catching the monster hiding inside all of us.

The Belgian brothers Michael and Andrew Van Ostade had many things to prove. That you can make a thrilling film on a small budget and that children like to shiver. That horror for children can be outrageously funny and the charm of artisanal crafts in general exceeds the perfection of clean CGI. That belief in old-fashioned craftsmanship and crazy stories dates back to their childhood.

Michael Van Ostade: Our passion for film was born in the video store. Roaming around the shop as a child,

my attention was always drawn by the GREMLINS video. That was clearly an adult film, I wasn't allowed to see it yet. Until I secretly grabbed that box again, and saw the magic words on the cover: 'for all ages'. That was simply unthinkable; this had to be a mistake! That's how my brother and I came to watch our first "horror movie", which turned out to be very funny. Andrew Van Ostade: And there was Aunt Sylvie's VHS collection! In her garage, we discovered STAR WARS, INDIANA JONES, ET, THE GOONIES, THE WITCHES, POLTERGEIST and many more great titles.

In the video store the choice for a certain movie was often based upon its cover. So you know how important that poster is!

Andrew: The poster that Michael designed for THE GHASTLY BROTHERS refers to Drew Struzan, who designed all those great iconic eighties posters; INDIANA JONES, THE GOONIES, STAR WARS, BLADE RUNNER, BACK TO THE FUTURE...



What kind of girl is Lilith?

Andrew: With Lilith we especially wanted to avoid the Alice in Wonderland syndrome; with all those crazy characters circling around her, she couldn't be dull and grey.

Eva Luna, how do you – as the main actress – remember the shooting?

Eva Luna Van Hyfte: It mainly meant: getting up extremely early! Earlier than on a school day. Luckily I didn't have to waste any time on make-up; just putting two dots in my hair and I was done.

Did covid make things more difficult

For you?

Michael: The very first word of the script was put on paper seven years ago. We started shooting in March 2020, and everyone knows what happened then...

Andrew: After 16 days of shooting, the first lockdown came. Only in the summer were we allowed to go back to work. When the "career choice day" scenes were shot, a maximum of 15 people were allowed in one room. We had a large crew, so the extras simulated that there were plenty of people, but in fact they had to walk from left to right through an empty room.

Besides a spectacular collection of ghosts and spirits, we also come across a special kind of demon living inside of us. Those are the worst?

Andrew: A little monster gnaws inside each of us, and the longer you ignore them, the more powerful they grow. Talking about it with others might make it easier to handle and control them.

Michael: The fear I felt as a child whenever I forgot about a test or



about my school diary was at least as big as the stress I feel as an adult when I fill out my tax return. "Oh no, I didn't study for my maths test, so I'm going to fail, so my entire life will go down the drain..." That stress was uncontrollable.

How were these demons to be captured in front of the camera?

Michael: The small ones were constructed in a studio with puppets, controlled by three fantastic craftsmen. They're animatronics, like the Muppets. But the couch that comes to life and the White Spirit were visibly present on set. That couch is my favourite – the idea of a sofa that eats chips and pocket money, that's where it all started for me.

Eva Luna: I saw my demon on the screen for the first time; he has long arms because he always wants to keep Lilith close. During the shooting I could feel him pulling my sweater but I never actually got to see him. The White Spirit was huge, at least four metres high, and even its eyes and eyebrows could move. Utterly weird: you know someone is controlling that colossus, but you forget it when you are face to face with it.

Nowadays everything can be made with computers, but for you it is



important to keep things real and tangible?

Michael: Things created with computers often feel weightless. We love that craft, the magic behind the mechanics.

The most disorienting scene in the film is a bad dream in black and white.

Andrew: In that scene we wanted to take things one step further, turning a crazy dream into a nightmare. We painted the kitchen set from the opening scene black and covered it with white lines to create an alienating feeling. We stood around with 12 people, moving panels and throwing balloons. Ever since the success of *STRANGER THINGS*, we know that kids genuinely want to get spooked, they want to dive deeper into that

dark world.

You guys really filmed at IKEA?

Michael: We begged them on our knees: we want to catch a monster at night in IKEA! They thought it was a great idea. That was a childhood dream come true.

Have you been playing in the ball pool?

Andrew: Unfortunately that was impossible due to covid. But we had a lot of fun there for three nights. When the last customers left, we were allowed to fill IKEA with slime. By daybreak everything was quickly cleaned up before customers returned.

You are brothers. What did that implicate for the project?

Eva Luna: Brothers argue; that's how

it goes. During rehearsals I already understood: I'll step aside while they fight it out, and then come get me once the decision is made.

Michael: If we squabble, it must be worth the effort. We are often on the same wavelength, but we sometimes had discussions about crucial choices. Since we are brothers, our on-screen arguments come across very naturally; they are based upon 30 years of training and exercise.

What is your favourite horror movie?

Michael: Can you spare us one hour...?

Eva Luna: An impossible question! Every time I asked, I got showered with titles.

Andrew: *EVIL DEAD 2* is my absolute favourite, but in case of watching with the entire family, I would go for *GREMLINS*.

Michael: *HEREDITARY* is the scariest movie I've ever seen; for a family audience I would recommend Steven Spielberg's original *POLTERGEIST*.

Eva Luna: I really liked *A QUIET PLACE*. But compared to these two guys, I haven't seen anything yet.

–

[Gert Hermans.](#)